

PM: Opposition's budget plan a joke

Nst 1 7 SEP 2002

PUTRAJAYA, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described the intention by Opposition parties to present their national budget as a joke.

Dr Mahathir said the Opposition had no idea of the size of the available government funds nor the wisdom to manage them accordingly.

"It's a joke because they don't know how much money we have and they want to make a budget. All they know is how to spend money to become popular," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said while the Opposition could go around making promises and trying to be popular by merely issuing vague statements, he had a responsibility to ensure programmes were implemented.

"I can also do that (try to be popular) but I have to be responsible, they are not responsible for collecting

the money and for administering the money (but) they want to table the budget," he said.

Dr Mahathir was responding to questions during a Press conference after attending the Ministry of Finance's monthly staff assembly and the official opening of the MoF Complex.

The Prime Minister said the so-called alternative budget which the Opposition had vowed to present was merely a political gimmick.

The alliance of Pas, Keadilan and Parti Rakyat Malaysia, calling itself the Opposition Front, announced last week that it would present a separate budget to oppose the budget to be tabled by Dr Mahathir this Friday.

Yesterday, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin lashed out at the Opposition's antics, saying that the idea of presenting an alternative budget was a disgrace to the Dewan

Rakyat.

Muhyiddin said that the Opposition's move was unconstitutional and not provided for under the Standing Orders of the House.

"It only goes on to show their arrogance," he said.

Meanwhile, Parti Keadilan Nasional vice-president Azmin Ali today said the Opposition planned to make public their "alternative budget" tomorrow in the Parliament lobby, before it was presented in the Dewan Rakyat on Monday.

He said the budget details would be given out at a Press conference at 4pm and added that it had been approved by the Opposition front's presidential council last night.

It was earlier reported that Parliament Opposition leader Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang would present the Opposition's budget on Sept 23, three days after the Government tabled the budget on Friday.